Chilliwack Pioneer Ladies

(Horatio Webb)

By One of the Old Boys

RB147, 932

CHILLIWACK PIONEER LADIES.

As we glance o'er all the valley,
On each field and road or alley,
We say, "To us it does seem very strange
That where forests once were growing,
Oats and clover now we're sowing,
And proudly tell you of this woundrous change."

In discussing their achievements,
And successes or bereavements,
Or relating interesting anecdotes,
Men are prone to feeling prouder,
And their boasting will be louder,
Forgetting all about the petticoats.

But the ladies are deserving
For their patient, faithful serving,
They were quiet, clever, neat, straight-going dames;
If you'll listen for an hour
We the valley well will scour
And do our best to tell you all their names.

First we'll speak of Mrs. Miller,
Who of Sumas was a pillar—
In Pasadena now she rests alone—
Years ago at Sumas Landing
You'd be sure to see her standing
Busy cleaning up her handsome house of stone.

Mrs. Kipp, the great grandmother,
And we think there's not another
More entitled to be called the valley queen;
For we know just what her like is,
And we're very sure that Ike is
Convinced she is the loveliest he's seen.

Now the next that we recall—
Patient Mrs. Matthew Hall—
She's been here with her soldier fifty years;
Both have crossed "the great divide"
And are sleeping side by side;
They were sturdy, thrifty, kind old pioneers.

Now we'll go to see Aunt Hannah
Cleaning house in her bandanna.
A speck of dust would surely make her ache;
And sometimes she would pester
Her beloved, patient Chester,
Accusing him of stealing her cream cake.

Mrs. William, (our Aunt Janie),
Always kind and shrewd and brainy,
'Tis over on the Sumas she belongs;
And she says "Now look here, Willie,
I just think you're awful silly—
You sing so very many funny songs."

Mrs. Henry Kipp's a stayer
'Tis a compliment we'd pay her,
Through all these years she's surely stood the test;
She has been a double mother,
Like her there's not many other,
For no one knows which family is the best.

Here's one of those old-time belles,
She's the wife of A. C. Wells—
Of horseback fame, and house-plants all galore;
Her husband is forgetful,
Which sometimes makes her fretful
And then a broom he brings her from the store.

Mrs. Forsyth's name was Susan,
And it truly was amusin'
To see her oxen on the way to church;
As she sat up in the wagon,
She at Willie kept a-naggin'
While John flogged Spot and Bully with his birch.

William Hall's wife's from Gibraltar
And her husband would exalt her,
While telling anecdotes about the war;
In the service he enlisted,
That's what made his legs so twisted,
She was with him in his travels near and far.

When we think of Mrs. Sicker,
There's no one could be quicker,
The way she'd dish John Sicker
up his hash;
Then her pace at once she'd quicken
Till you'd fear she'd faint and sicken
Building up her pumpkin pie and
succotash.

Mrs. Reece, so large and rosy,
Keeping everything so cosy,
Always careful of her actions and
her tongue;
She objected to the laddies
For she said that all their daddies
Were not chasing after girls when
they were young.

Now for Mrs. George so fussy,
Giving good advice to Gussie,
Picking slivers out for Ed. and
Steve. and Dave;
And to George she'd keep a-tellin'
All about her baby Helen,
Dressing Birdie up and making
her behave.

We remember Mrs. Evans
In her pair of number sevens,
Making butter that would please
you till you'd scream,
When she'd churn she'd always
linger
Long enough to lick her finger,
For she said it was a shame to
waste the cream.

A real lady, Mrs. Lewis,
When we met she always knew us—
I say "she always knew us when we met"—
She belongs to Sumas Prairie,
She's as quick as any fairy,
Though aged, she's very interesting yet.

And when thinking of these dames
We come now to Mrs. James,
Another Chadsey woman left alone
You sometimes might perplex her
But you'd surely never vex her;
For goodness only she must now atone.

Jane McDonald from the Landing,
Whom we now see proudly standing,
She was widowed, but ambitious, strong and hale;
We could see her through the wicket
Take a stamp and gently lick it,
Then place it upside down upon the mail.

Mrs. Mac the farm has fired
For she says "I'm getting tired,
I've given up my chickens and my calf,"
Mr. Mac delights to tease her—
He's a wicked, old-time "geezer,"
And the father of the valley telegraph.

And we haven't once forgotten
Our good friend, old Mrs. Cotton,
We hear her raise the tune when
in the church;
Treble, alto, tenor, bass—
She could take a strong man's place—
Her music had no jerkiness nor
lurch.

Mrs. Ashwell we discover
To the valley with her lover
Came about the year of eighteen-
sixty-eight;
Of Old England she's a native—
That's why she's appreciative—
Though aged she is by no means
out of date.

Now we come to Mrs. Ryder
And her John who likes his cider,
She's fresh as ever, looking just
like new;
John at one time was a freighter,
And there wasn't any greater
Of the men who drove their teams
to Cariboo.

Just a moment now we'll wander
Down to Upper Sumas yonder,
And see our good, kind friend,
old Mrs. York;
Of all the Fraser ladies,
Whether Susans, Janes or Sadies,
She was first to have a visit from
the stork.

Mrs. Ranford, small and plucky,
Always feeling pretty lucky.
Her husband now has left her here alone;
She's from the Emerald Island
'Cross the channel from the highland
Where everybody licks the blarney stone.

Now here's one who's free from slanders,
'Tis old Mrs. D. Gillanders;
Ask Albert, he can tell you what she did;
How she lectured Mart and Maggie,
Spanking little Joe so shaggy,
Overlooking neither William, Wes nor Mid.

Mrs. Nelson you'll remember
If you met her in December
Her smile would warm you nicely through and through;
Although with years she's laden
She's as rosy as a maiden;
Apparently she's just as good as new.

Now another of these dears—
Our Aunt Margaret, Mrs. Peers—
As good as gold, and always full of jokes;
If you met her in the garden
She would never ask your pardon,
But treat you all to fruit and artichokes.

Mrs. Webb was once a Yankee,
And she's seldom ever cranky,
But somehow she has always been
the boss;
Making Raish attend his knittin'
Wind the clock and oust the kitten
And bring her fruit for jam and
applesauce.

Next we think of Mrs. Hector
And we very much respect her
And gladly give her place among
the troop;
For she has a splendid record—
Absolutely it's uncheckered—
She's the widow of our old friend,
Hector Toop.

Mrs. Williams, from Australia—
And she surely would derail you
If you should chance to speak ill
of her Bob.—
They from Ireland migrated,
To the Bradshaw's they're related;
Her royal blood within her used
to throb.

Mrs. Whitfield, always pleasant—
At Victoria she's at present—
'Tis years ago but we do not
forget
When she moved down to the city
And we said 'twas such a pity
Time has not changed our views,
we think so yet.

Next is Mrs. Cory Ryder
All her neighbors, who beside her
Have lived in peace for two score
years or more,
They can tell you of the pleasure
They enjoyed in heaping measure
As they visited at times within
her door.

Mrs. Woodward we're recalling,
And it truly is appalling.
To think she left here forty years
ago;
Though to us she is no stranger
Yet we fear there is a danger
In Chilliwack she'd not know
where to go.

Chapman's wife has long been taken
And the valley she's forsaken—
While here she lived and played
her part quite well;
Years ago they emigrated
And a blacksmith shop created;
Behind the anvil stood Emanuel.

Long before the roads were gravelled
When on horseback people travelled,
Not in buggies and in autos as
just now;
Robert Thompson came to settle,
Smoke his pipe and boil his kettle,
Up beside the little mountain
with his frau.

Mrs. Greyell and her large family
Came here years ago and calmly
Settled down on Camp Slough banks without a fear.
Her family now have wandered
But none of them have squandered
The good name of that brave old pioneer.

When Mrs. Reeves and Daddy,
Who was witty as a Paddy,
From Ontario came here with all their kids;
They were forced to toil and struggle
And in a small house snuggle,
And so we now to her take off our lids.

James McConnell's wife—"behold you"—
Whom before we haven't told you—
Has now been gone a half a score of years;
She was faithful as the summer,
And her husband was a hummer—
He'd sing in church till all would hold their ears.

Mrs. Wilson, who's still active,
Always happy and attractive,
Her grip of duties she will never slack;
Keeping tab on Doll and Bessie,
'Phoning up to speak with Jessie,
And trying hard to keep her eye on Jack.

Mrs. Sampson Toop, so cheerful,
Never sullen, dark or tearful,
Never taking time from duty for to cry;
She is now a great grandmother,
Just two girls—as yet no brother,
But she says, "you know there may be by and by."

Mrs. Dunvill's name is Kitty.
We're not trying to be witty—
A compliment to her we wish to pay;
She says "Dunvill, you're too dirty;
Come, now Dear, and change your shirty;"
And Dunvill went and did it straightaway.

Mrs. Bartlett—now in slumber—
Where the graves the hill encumber,
Was known to many neighbor folks as "Ma."
Joys and sorrows both she tasted,
And her time was never wasted;
She came here forty years ago with "Da."

Mrs. Gibson has departed
And her Johnny's broken-hearted,
He's sure her equal now is not abroad;
For he saying that on the level,
A bad woman's from the devil
But a good one surely is the gift of God.

And it wouldn't be in keeping,
While we speak of those who're sleeping,
To pass by Mrs. Hodgson at this time;
For there wasn't one was slicker
In a bargain, trade or dicker,
Of the ladies whom we've mentioned in our rhyme.

Mrs. Colbeck too is resting,
Where no labors are infesting,
And daily grind gives place to quiet hours.
What a contrast to the weeding,
And to helping Tommy seeding,
Or chasing home the cows between the showers.

Now another one so nimble
With her needle, broom and thimble;
She came here years before we saw a car;
"Mrs. Mac" the new ones call her;
Older ones would lose a dollar
If all were fined for saying "Mrs. Farr."

And we now think of another
Who's long since a great grandmother,
Deceased she is these many years ago;
And this good old couple's places

Now are filled by other faces—
She was the wife of Gilbert H. Munro.

East of town, up by the fountain,
Close beside the little mountain,
Mrs. Cawley'd come to meet us at the gate;
She was very much respected,
And her husband was elected
More than once to be our own chief magistrate.

Mrs. Nelems was so brave
Coming here to wed her Dave,
In times when houses all resembled barns;
Once she thought she saw her darling
Up at Cory's, loudly quarreling,
But Dave had only started telling yarns.

Mrs. Stevenson, so stately,
Doing everything sedately,
Respect she has of neighbors, one and all;
Her husband is a miner,
Just a real old forty-niner—
Colonel Robert we all call him, large and small.

There's another one so nifty,
On the shady side of fifty,

For she's been here forty years I
do suppose;
She is neither long nor lanky
And her husband's seldom cranky;
This will serve to introduce our
Mrs. Rose.

We could sing you many sonnets,
Of those days of large sunbonnets,
Of nightcaps worn at night when
it was dark;
Or of the Sunday bonnet
With a flower garden on it
Which once adorned the head of
Mrs. Clark.

Mrs. Mac., from Sumas—bless her!
Is the very proud possessor
Of a double family no one tells
apart;
And we know she'll take it shyly
When we speak of her so highly,
And tell you of her great step-
mother's heart.
Mrs. Harrison, so handy—
And she surely is a dandy—
We don't forget her pluck and
hotel fame;
She did business at the Landing,
And her next hotel's still standing;
We hope it may do justice to her
name.

Thirty years ago and four
There was landed on our shore,

A pair of lovers straight from
Napanee;
The bridegroom's name was Jesse,
And his bride, who was so dressy,
Was Lapum's wife—we called her
"Jessie she."

Mrs. Nowell was sometimes stormy,
We dont blame her though when
Normy
Persisted so in calling Hart a
a boob;
And when Hulda teased poor Victor,
He his temper lost and kicked her;
Lavina then had run away with
Reub.

If I told your every virtue
Of this matron it would hurt you,
For you'd be sitting quiet many
hours;
She was with us many seasons,
And was loved for many reasons—
The mother of the family Branch-
flowers.

Mrs. Peers, the wife of Joseph,
Who can tell you that she knows if
This valley was composed of those
who work;
For she one time used to putter
'Round the dairy, making butter
Not strong she was, but never
known to shirk.

Lizzie Miller from the mansion,
Milking cows while in the stanchion,
As happy girl as ever you espied;
J. L. Atkinson, the teacher,
Came along and brought a preacher
And soon had little Lizzie for his bride.

Grandma Henderson—we miss her—
For the kiddies used to kiss her,
When laid away we thought she'd served her time;
But Grandpa didn't think so
And he'd tell you while he blink so,
"A shame it is; she's only in her prime."

We'll now visit Mrs. Murray,
Who is always in a hurry,
Making garden, picking berries, seeking eggs;
And 'twould surely beat the dickens
How she'd rustle with the chickens,
She understood just how to pull their legs.

Now we come to Mrs. Nevin
And Dave says that she is even
Nicer now than when she came here years ago;
They are living up at Rosedale
And if all goes well I suppose they'll
Remain there for another year or so.

There's another one that's left us,
And it sorely has bereft us,
'Tis years ago but we can still
discern her;
She was everybody's neighbor,
Full of love and peace and labor;
This wil introduce you now to
Mrs. Turner.

Just a word of Alma Bonter.
This is what made Jim Keith want
her—
She was gentle, yet withal so
strong and brave;
On the hillside first he met her,
And he vowed he'd surely get her.
She was living with her Aunt and
Uncle Dave.

Mrs. Kitchen was a wonder,
And just tell us why in thunder
Such dames as she should ere
grow old at all;
She has been here many summers
And we challenge newer comers
To search her house from Kitchen
back to Hall.

Still our memory now is turning
And our hearts renew their yearning
For the mother who was taken
from her flock;
Her life was not all leisure,
Neither was it ease nor pleasure—
James Miller's wife, as faithful
as the clock.

Mrs. Smith, the wife of Andy,
She is tall but quick and handy;
  She's with us still, and may she
    long abide;
Andy was a sturdy thresher,
And he must have been a masher
  Or he'd ne'er have captured such
    a worthy bride.

Mrs. Kickbush, always working,
Never careless, slow nor shirking,
  She's not afraid sometimes to
    work out doors;
Makes the best of bread and butter,
And is never known to mutter
  If she sometimes has to help to
    do the chores.

Then there's Mrs. George McKeever,
And Mac wouldn't dare to leave her,
  Nor did he try to e'er give her the
    slip;
But he'd always ask permission
To go threshin', shootin'), fishin',
  And then he'd say, "now please
    your ladyship."

Mrs. Shelton Knight of Sardis—
Never did she yet discard us—
  She's seen some both of poverty
    and wealth;
From the farm she's now retired,
For a fortune she's acquired,
  And always is the picture of good
    health.

Mrs. Cross, the wife of Johnny,
Always happy, bright and bonnie,
Her cottage is a peaceful, home-
like place;
She has long since left off farming
For she says it was alarming
To see the lines increase in
Johnny's face.

When Mrs. Street and Flossie,
With her Arthur, who's too bossy,
Came over, nearly forty years ago,
They were welcomed by these
matrons,
And considered splendid patrons,
For they came here straight from
old Ontario.

Mrs. Calbick's name is Lizzie;
She has always been quite busy,
But she's patient and as gentle
as a lamb;
Taking care of all her kiddies,
Building trousers, kilts and middies
And darning socks and mittens
for her Sam.

We remember one so queenly,
Doing nothing rash nor meanly,
Her friends we could now name
you by the ton;
She was very much admired—
Graceful, loving and retired—
She was the wife of J. C.
Henderson.

This bad girl, we won't excuse her,
We'll eternally accuse her,
Athough no doubt she thinks she she has done right;
That, while wearing her short dresses,
Her hair hanging down in tresses,
She galloped off and married William Knight.

Here is one was once a teacher,
She's the daughter of a preacher,
And the sister of a preacher; she's real sweet;
She's a stayer at camp meeting,
Giving all a friendly greeting;
She's now the wife of our friend Charlie Street.

Now we think of Mrs. Vedder;
To the altar no one's led her
Since she was left a widow, years ago;
She's now living in a cottage
Where some people get their pottage
Across the street from Adam's bungalow.

And we now have come to Fanny—
It's Miss Irwin, who's so canny—
She's missed some both of trouble and of joys;
She is sometimes now comparing
Her past life, but not despairing
For she says there are so many nice old boys.

Now while this you've been perusing
And we hope it's been amusing—
Convinced we are we very soon must stop;
For this constant fitting, scheming,
Standing, lying down and dreaming
Has pretty well described the old-time crop.

Of these older one's we've spoken,
And we've given each a token—
They've nearly all been here for forty years;—
Now we'll give our best attention
For a time and briefly mention
A number of these younger pioneers.

But you'll say, "This rhymster fellow,
Don't you hear him shout and bellow?
He's the craziest, you know, I've ever heard;
What's he know of Mrs. Snider
For he never lived beside her,
(Such talk as his is truly most absurd).

What's he know of Mrs. Parker
Save that John went East to spark her?
Mrs. Hamilton, whose family is a horde?
Listen now! Oh, mercy save us!

He's skipped Mrs. C. C. Davis
Also Madams Beaumont, Collinson and Ford.

What's he know of Mrs. Lickman?
And that other with her slick man?
What's he know of Armstrong, Charlton, Patterson?
Do you think he's telling truly
All of Denholm, Templar Uhley,
Rounsfell, Brett and Hilton, Bent and Vickerson?

To the townsite if he'd ramble
He'd not know our Sarah Campbell,
Her name was Douglas when she went away;
And he couldn't flirt with Jessie
She's so clever, neat and dressy,
Who afterward was Mrs. Kennedy.

What's he know of Mrs. Proctor?
Or the wife of our old doctor?
Her name's McLean — may thoughts of her ne'er ebb;
Then he speaks of Mrs. Purdy,
Says she's aged but bright and sturdy,
And that he knows our Mrs. Charlie Webb.

What's he know of Mrs. Midgley
From the district that's so ridgely?
What's he know of Mrs. Johnston?
Mrs. Brown?

And then that Mrs. Martin
With her husband who's a smart
un?
Was he ever introduced to Mrs.
Towne?

Listen to him tell so gaily
Something now of Mrs. Bailey,
(I'm sure he doesn't know just
where he's at);
And then Mrs. Sam Tretheway,—
(Now he's surely going flewy)—
Then another one Trethewey
after that.

What's he know of Mrs. Newby
Only that her man's no booby?
What's he know of Mrs. Wilson
and her babe?
What's he know of Mrs. Willis
Only that she'd surely kill us
If we ever said a word against
her Abe?

What's he know of Mrs. Stady
Only that she is a lady?
Mrs. Bradshaw, Mrs. Maynard?
(It's all bosh)
What's he know of Mrs. Mercer
With her Jim who was her purser?
Widow Atkinson? Or Mrs.
McIntosh?

Madams Robertson and Nicol?
Mrs. Ballam, never fickle?

Madams Bellrose and McDonald
too, and Bell?
Pearson, Prowse, McKenzie, Huff,
Still we haven't room enough,
For there's Jackman, Barritt,
Preston and Ramsdell."

You will say this fellow's partial
For he mentions Mrs. Marshall.
And Mrs. Watson, too, and then
McSween;
Then two other Mrs. Mercers,
Who are truly great conversers,
And then our friends the
Brannicks and McLean

Mrs. Tyson, too, he mentions
Seemingly with good intentions.
What's he know of Mrs. Higginson forsooth?
Says he knew our Mrs. Fletcher
Before Jack came here to catch her,
That he knew of Mrs. Barber and
her youth.

Now he speaks of Mrs. Ferris—
Says he saw her on the terrace—
On Alma street her home is in
our burg;
Says Rebecca was a baker
Before Chris came here to take her,
And coax her to be Mrs.
Vradenburg.

Mrs. George Webb too—he knows
her—
Says her Georgie is a poser;
Mrs. Arnould and her Joe—now
don't that jar
Then Mrs. Richard Somers
She's of the older comers,
Mrs. Mellard too, and also Mrs.
Carr.

Then the Smith's, you know, named
Neville—
(In their name they surely revel)—
Mrs. Ogle, too, and Mrs. Wilkin-
son;
Then our good friend Mrs. Coote,
And her Major, who's a "beaut,"
Mrs. Pelly, also Mrs. Jesperson.

Listen now!—He tries to name us—
Mrs. Robinson and Amos,
And Mrs. Cramer, too, (that
makes him think);
And he nearly gave the slip
To our Mrs. Andrew Kipp
In his hurry for to tell of Mrs.
Zink.

What's he know of our Miss Whitley,
Only that she is so fitly
Deserving of a place along the
rank,
Brother Tom was once our teller,
Supervised the creamery cellar
And is now the supeintendent of a
bank.

Then the Thornions came in numbers,
And the Crankshaws and McCumbers,
Roland Ryder's wife and also Mrs. Good;
Then our good friend Mrs. Barrow—
Who's kept busy as a sparrow
Making Dodsley stay at home and chop the wood.

There are some who have been peeving,
And a few, of course, been leaving,
Assuring us they never would be back;
But they're mostly all returning,
After lessons they've been learning,
Saying, "Good enough for me is Chilliwack."

Thirty years from now, if living,
And our compliments we're giving,
Let us hope our record may be good and clean;
And we'll call on Mrs. Carter
When we're looking for a starter,
And we'll reckon back from nineteen and fifteen.

Now we'll bulk them all together,
As we would a season's weather,
And give they every credit which we should;
Then we'll tell to one another

Something nice of every mother;
We're prouder of the valley's
womanhood.

So now my lady reader
If you'd hope e'er to succeed her,
Be modest, patient, thoughtful
and sedate;
Cut out all your foolish wobbles,
Cremate all your slits and hobbles,
And strive her virtues all to
emulate.

And in sizing up our neighbors,
Their shortcomings and their labors,
Convinced we are that none of
us can boast;
We must admit quite calmly
That we're parts of one huge family,
And of each other we must make
the most.

January 1st, 1915.

FROM THE OFFICE OF

THE CHILLIWACK PROGRESS